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AS WE GROW OLDER

*The world becomes stranger, the pattern
more complicated*

*Of Dead and living, not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.*
- George Seferis

The year, for us, began in Louis's backyard on the Atlantic ocean side of Key West - a picturesque place with great food, waves splashing at your feet, a gentle breeze and low drifting white clouds just over your head - a perfect way to end a year and begin another. Back to Chicago to bitter cold - blizzards - rain - ice storms - tornadoes and wind and more wind. February 3rd, Chicago was the coldest place in the U.S. Earthquakes in Guatemala where our former colleague - Jose Mojica lost his life in the service of his church. The Flu rampant in the city. Stone out for ten days with a very bad case of it. All that along with the Physical Education Departments doing their best at wrecking all the students - breaking arms, tearing tendons and destroying knees - automobile accidents - name it - February had it.

On the good side was the Eliot Feld Ballet performances with Naomi Sorkin dancing to perfection - reaching this high point of perfection where does one go? That seems to be the penalty of perfection. February 20th we gave two performances at the Riverside Junior High School after considerable trouble - but blessed with one of the nicest days of the entire year. SC's first performances there were in 1953 and this one was our 8th. Late in February my last remaining Brother fell while hospitalized and broke his femur - a week later I flew to Montana to his funeral. Do not have much to go back to now and with Urban Renewal destroying most of the old historic places in Last Chance Gulch, there is little to see anymore.

The only thing to remain the same and has improved is the very beautiful St. Helena Cathedral - one of America's most beautiful churches.

At this same time, our good friend Charles Bockman was going through a great battle for his health and coming through nobly some 13 weeks later.

In the Americana Bulletin issue, there were two major omissions - "Strange New Street" choreographed by Stone and danced by Ruth Ann Koesun and John Kriza and "The Shooting of Dan Mac Grew" which I danced with various narrators including Henry Swisko, Basil Cross and Bently Stone.

Came time for spring cleaning before Joan Lawson's arrival - no small task keeping two large floors clean in downtown Chicago - washing walls - furniture - hundreds of pictures - drapes - windows, etc. American Ballet Theatre arrived at the same time as Lawson. Naturally a busy social whirl followed, with going nightly to the Ballet and parties for Lawson. ABT really came through for Chicago this time as they have not done in the past and it paid off for them. Baryshnikov was worth the season - even in that stupid ballet of Twyla Tharp's - his character was certainly patterned after the famous Russian clown Popov and it was a delight.

The Lawson course - March 29th through April 9th - was a tour de force this year in every respect. She is a human dynamo with a wealth of knowledge at her disposal which she gives freely and very generously - the two weeks were gone before we knew it - and this year we had beautiful weather for her. Nice to know that one can still get excited about a dance program - Pearl Lang's Dance Company was a really great evening of dance - creatively her "Dybbuk" was the best thing this year - and what a splendid choreographer she is - especially for her men. All this with a heavy program of Bi-Centennial reading

in between - we did not get to see the TV series but did read the "Adams Chronicles" - Carl Binger's "Thomas Jefferson" - "The History of Jefferson's Administration" by Henry Adams and "Samuel Adams Revolution" by Cass Canfield. What a Great group of people we had back in those days - what has happened since?

April ended with the annual concerts at St. Alphonsus which appeared to top all programs in the past. Each section of the program had its rooters but Stone's "Celebration" and "That Daring Young Man" were what people talked about most - certainly they went off extremely well with the public. We had lost so many dancers last year to New York and Europe that this year was our greatest challenge - and next year will be the same...with Mary Randolph, Scott Schlexer off to New York and Tracey Huntley and Randy Mele to the Pennsylvania Ballet.

In August Diane and Daniel Riely will join the Frankfurt Ballet Company in Germany. Of last years evacuees - Darleen Callaghan and Mark Trudeau recently danced in The SAB school program. Vannessa Meria has resigned to dance in the Lubeck Opera Ballet in Germany - Judith Bardis has left Skidmore and is about New York. It is always pleasant when old friends stop in to "view the body" (so to speak) and at various times this spring we have seen Sheila and Bill Reilly, George Tyschen, Bill Gatewood and Suzette Pompei - who arrived home just in time to pinch hit for an injured dancer on our program. Biggest surprise of the year was Bill Maloney whom we had not seen since 1960 basically the same but when he left he was an uncertain intravert and now he is a total extravert - every expression is an exclamatory explosion punctuated with wild laughter - no doubt, part of his acting technique.

June 13th we had a reunion of dancers from the old Chicago Civic Opera (1928-32) which was great fun - Florence Vaughn came from Wilmington, Delaware - Naomi Smith, Barbara Warren and Louise Shott (names used are those they danced under) came from Florida - June Runyon came from Tulsa, Oklahoma and locally we had Harriet Lundgren, Lynette Corrigan, Kittie Andrews, Edwina Smith and Stone and myself. Unable to come were Ruth Pryor in California and Virginia Nugent from Tennessee. Edward Caton was in the area but could not be reached - just like as of old. There were those no one has ever heard from so could not be con-

tacted. At our dinner - set for 16 - our first toast was to those who could not be there - Julia Barashkova, Sandy Davis, Marion Finholt, Valery Strechnev, Donna Parks, Julian Francesco, Turner Lundgren and Sven Larson - all off - we hope in a better world. We all left with a happy feeling and thought it should be done every year in a different city. Florence, Barbara and Naomi stayed around for several days so we had other happy hours together. The one no one seemed to know anything about was Lee Foley - dead or alive?

And the top of the year was the return of Kirsten Ralov from the Royal Danish Ballet for a fascinating two week session. As a teacher she is unique in that she sells charm - along with the difficult Bournonville method. Her feet are like a kitten's paws and her arms delightfully natural - about a third of the class was repeats from last year and the balance soon measured up to the work. Sandra Caverley was again present from York University recording the Danish work for a book by the Benesh system. Fredborn Bjornsson, Kirsten's husband (also a dancer and teacher) visited and watched classes. He too, has the Danish charm and we were glad to know him better. Visitors for Ralov's course included Edna McRae, Ruth Page, Ann Barzel, Ruth Ann Koesun and Mary Gehr.

During Ralov's stay we had to move her from the LaSalle Hotel to the Bismarck - the LaSalle having been at this address we have lost the Morrison, the Brevoort, the Sherman, Great Northern, Atlantic and the Planters. Pretty soon no loop Hotels.

The Character Seminar was a resounding success with a fine group of teachers attending. Totally absent from the group were the older SC alumni who had all profited so much in their careers by this work. Those who did attend were of the middle generation (55-70's) and no doubt will be able to carry on this work and turn out better dancers. In a sense, this course was also a reunion of a group that had all gone on separate ways after a number of years. We all missed Yvonne Brown who had just undergone serious surgery and was not well enough to be out. Attending were Phyllis DeWeese from Cincinnati, Barbara Seaver from Birmingham, Michigan, Barbara McCulloch from Macomb, Illinois, Liz

Wimeberg (recently married, now Appleton) from Dartmouth College, Louise Glenn from San Diego, Elleva Davidson from Minneapolis, Mary Carol Cockey from North Carolina, Judy Svalander from Crystal Lake, Ellen Jones from Cary, Terry Bullard from Kalamazoo, Waltraud Karkar from Wausau, Danna Ryan from Midland, Michigan, Dawn Mora from the Goodman Theatre School and locally, Donnie Jo Biddle, Tone Lorvig, Carren Harte, Edith Hennington, Bonnie Von Drushka, Bonnie Areelean and Rose Ann De Spain.

As of August 1st, we are vacation bound for Europe again this year. During the month, we will take in Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Vienna and Munich with side trips here and there.

ON CHICAGO

While Chicago is a truly great city - and we do love it or we would not have remained here so long - it has one great fault - its attitude toward the dance.

I recently found a word that fits the city in its relation to local dance - the word is "pococurante" ... meaning indifferent. Of late, our insouciant critics are mainly at fault. They are totally unconcerned unless it involves the amateur college activities - the ridiculously strange, or some ethnic-oriented cause resembling political echolalia. When one reads their reviews, one wonders what they saw, what they mean and how they can justify their views. Even Arlene Croce, a once very sensible and good critic, now goes in for the gobbly-de-gook ... or echolalia.

There was a time when Chicago had writers with better taste. To name a few - Claudia Smith, Edward Moore, and Herman Devries. In those pleasant days - we had a school - and still were able to receive reviews in the papers and not have to beg to be placed on the calendar.

Now - all this talk of a Chicago Ballet - with their pixy-led women's boards - professional dunners and money sniffers - and all the lip-homage from those who do not know good from bad in dance. The truth is that the pococurante city of Chicago missed several chances in the past to have its company. The Chicago Civic Opera during the Swoboda

and Novikoff periods had an excellent company of from 40 to 60 dancers who performed "Swan Lake" - "Le Coq d'Or" - "Prince Igor" - "Chopiniana" - "Raymonda Variations" - and "El Amor Brujo". In off seasons they danced "Coppelia" and "Pulcinella". Another great effort - now forgotten - in 1941 at the Goodman Theatre the Chicago Ballet Guild gave a performance billed as the "Chicago Ballet" that REALLY WAS a Chicago Ballet, in that all involved were Chicago dancers and many are still in the local profession. Amazing how much can be forgotten and how little present day writers care to know of the past.

ON WALKING

I usually begin telling a new group in my Character classes that all dance is based on walking and use Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes words to impress my point - "Walking, then, is a perpetual falling with a perpetual self-recovery. It is a most complex, violent and perilous operation which we divest of its extreme danger only by continual practice from a very early period of life."

BUT, I expect ballet which professes to be an art to go further in its development. Recently, in an hour-long TV program of the Pennsylvania Ballet Company there was enough walking and running in the ballets presented to go twice around the world. The TV medium cruelly reveals the poverty of designed movement in the choreography. In this program the only choreography was in the class room scenes. For many years a favorite criticism of a choreographer was that he or she was too classroom in their technique. Now the creators have gone to the other extreme - that all one sees is splits on one leg - arabesques by the thousands - an occasional attitude all connected by walking and running. Balanchine has long been the exponent of this expressionless non-choreography with trained dancers. Possibly on stage something else can come through but on the TV screen one is only conscious of the emptiness.

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